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Covert-Action Bar In Nicaragua Urged

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Rep. Michael D. Barnes (D-Md.), saying the administration's Central America policy is based on a "dangerous delusion," introduced legislation yesterday to bar U.S.-backed covert action against Nicaragua's leftist regime.

The legislation, reminiscent of the step Congress took in 1975 to prevent secret involvement in Angola's civil war, comes amid intense debate over President Reagan's moves to deter communist encroachment in the hemisphere.

Barnes, who chairs the House inter-American affairs subcommittee, offered his legislation in response to news reports that Reagan approved a \$19 million plan to form a CIA-backed paramilitary force to disrupt the Nicaraguan government and stem a flow of arms to Salvadoran rebels.

"This is only the latest in a long series of reports, all undenied by the administration, of planned covert activity against Nicaragua," he told a news conference. "It is hard to imagine that we would do anything so stupid."

Recalling the CIA's ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, Barnes said any secret operations to weaken the Sandinista regime in Managua would be an ill-advised escalation of strife in the region.

Barnes proposed amending the Foreign Assistance Act to prohibit the use of U.S. funds for military or paramilitary actions against Nicaragua. If enacted, his bill would, in effect, ban most types of covert action.

In another development, the administration was urged in a letter released yesterday to delay certification that would allow resumption of military aid and sales to Argentina and Chile until they have improved their human-rights performance.

In both countries "repression has been institutionalized," said Rep. Don Bonker (D-Wash.), chairman of the House human rights subcommittee, in a March 4 letter to Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr.

Bonker's letter was prompted by the administration's decision to include \$50,000 for military training for both Argentina and Chile in the security and military aid program for fiscal 1983.